The Five-Province Heresy

A Menace to National Unity

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A member of the N.W.T. Legislature, 1894-1904

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The first session of the Rowell Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations at Winnipeg opened somewhat inauspiciously when it gave precedence to recommendations which had come to it from many citizens whose identities and habitats had not been disclosed and who represented to the Commission that Canada, with a population of 11,000,000 people, and nine provinces, could be administered more efficiently with five administrative units—the Maritimes, Quebec, Ontario, the three Prairie Provinces as one province, and British Columbia and the Yukon as one.

The Premier of Manitoba must have been somewhat disconcerted and surprised. His response was prophetic. "A few years ago," he said, "I advanced a proposal to make the three Prairie Provinces one provincial unit. If another such proposal is not more favorably received than that there is not much hope of its being accomplished throughout Canada."

Premier Bracken was the third Premier of Manitoba to make a futile attempt to violate an underlying principle of our federal union. In 1896 Premier Greenway essayed the role of Ahab, the coveter of Naboth's vineyard. The Winnipeg Free Press and the weekly press of the Territories made him promptly lose interest in his proposal. Premier Roblin invaded the Territories and debated jointly with Premier Haultain the question of annexing a large section of the Territories to Manitoba. He had the co-operation of the Premier of the Territories. Had Premier Haultain's one-province policy prevailed he would have acceded to the premiership of that province, but when two were established he had not been Premier of either, and, fortunately, fell between two stools. In the only constituency where the establishment of two provinces between Manitoba and British Columbia was made an issue the two-province candidate was returned by an overwhelming majority.

Some years ago an Ontari
reported as having addressed
matters political. During his a
that Canada is the most over-go
the world. "Every Canadian,"
support ten governments: nine
national." He seems to have k
the sum of nine and one but, a
realize that no Canadian lives
at the same time. The amazin
clergyman's miscalculation was
who swallowed it—"bait, hook a

I suspect that some of the ci
representations to the Commiss
closing their identities or thei
among those who heard or read
gross exaggeration.

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their neighbors to the N th
Constitution of Canada. Whil
Constitution our "Fathers of
learned much from the previou
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They improved on it, especially
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legislation and Provincial admini
know that the federal union of th
is indissoluble; civil war settled
no secession with its concomitant,

The representations made to t
as to "Canada with a population
people and nine provinces" did n
any future increase in the populat
The proposed "Five Provinces" can
to include only Canada's population
also its population in centuries to
of us who have seen the growth
West in the last half-century do
fact that millions of Canadians beli

Ontario clergyman was
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over-governed country in
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: nine provincial and one
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but, apparently, did not
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South know more about
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to be of a type fit to be reproduced. Their belief is well-founded. Canada's area exceeds by one-fourth that of the United States. It has no monopoly of drouth areas nor of mountain ranges. It has more than the lion's share of the great Laurentian Shield, and now, in terms of gold and silver, and of many minerals, we appraise it in terms of national growth and development. Let us have faith in our future.

The proposed Triune Province (the three Prairie Provinces as one) has an aggregate area of 758,817 square miles, which is more than the aggregate of all the States bordering on the Atlantic Ocean, on the Gulf of Mexico and the east bank of the Mississippi, together with the States of West Virginia, Indiana, Illinois and the seventy square miles of the District of Columbia.

None of these States, though many of them have small areas, have ever sought union with the others. The Territory of Dakota, with an area of 140,000 square miles, was granted the privilege of deciding by ballot whether to come into the union as one State or as two; therefore the States of North and South Dakota. The people of the United States magnify the national. The Five Province heresy is a reprehensible attempt to magnify the provincial.

Between the Eastern boundary of Manitoba and the Western boundary of Quebec lies over-grown Ontario. Its town of Rainy River is 1,050 miles by rail from Toronto. Its Twin Cities at the head of the lakes—Fort William and Port Arthur—are more than 800 miles away from their provincial capital. Is this **local** government?

Confronting Ontario across the international boundary of rivers and lakes lie the States of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota with an aggregate area of 390,466 square miles; that of Ontario is 407,262 square miles—16,796 square miles more than that of the seven States. Small wonder that "Old

Ontario" might like other provinces to become like herself, a travesty on our federal union When New Ontario, with its Eastern boundary line somewhere near Michipicoten, the Albany River and James Bay, Ontario will no longer be a travesty on our Canadian federal union. No province should be so overgrown as to think of Canada consisting of itself and what's left.

The aggregate area of the "Three Prairie Provinces" is almost fifteen times as large as that of England; twenty-five times as large as Scotland and twenty-three times as large as Ireland. The megalomania of Ontario and Quebec has made it difficult for a cartoonist not to represent Jack Canuck without a chesty chest and a pendulous paunch.

Press reports indicate that the three Maritime Provinces did not bubble with enthusiasm over the proposal to make them a triune province. They each have an identity and a history of which they may well be proud. They know that the larger the area of a country or a province the less close the supervision of its expenditures, and the less close the supervision the greater the extravagance.

There is constructive work for the Dominion-Provincial Commission to do. Athwart the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Straits of Belle Isle lies Newfoundland and its Atlantic coast of Labrador. A penurious Government of Canada allowed a disagreement as to subsidies to prevent its becoming a Canadian province. Financial burdens have led to its yielding up, pro tempore, its right of self-government. To a layman it would appear to be the first line of defence on the St. Lawrence. May the Commission be enabled to speed the day when Newfoundland is part of Canada!

On the West coast of British Columbia lies Vancouver Island and its large brood of islets. It was once a Crown colony. When a remote government united the Island Colony with that

of the mainland an endeavor was made to weld them together by building a capacious capitol on the island. The experience of Prince Edward Island as the smallest province, with its 2,184 square miles, and the experience of the small State of Rhode Island, with its 1,248 square miles, and the seven other United States with areas of less than 10,000 square miles, suggests that Vancouver Island, with its 13,000 square miles, is not too small to become a separate province. It is larger than Belgium and twice as large as Wales. It has an identity it cannot lose. Its relatively insignificant area yoked with the mainland will continue to militate against its development. This "Prince Edward Island" of the Pacific will not be particularly well pleased by the megalomaniacal proposal to unite the 355,855 square miles of British Columbia with the 205,346 of the Yukon and so to beget another giant province in Canada and to hasten the day when Canada may have its own secession movement to combat.

Ours is a federal union. We should magnify the national. Born in Upper Canada, reared in rural Ontario and resident in Saskatchewan for half a century, I have learned to take an ocean-to-ocean view of things Canadian. I would that I could help my fellow Canadians to realize that the spirit of national unity can only thrive when and while we magnify the national without minimizing the provincial. I would hold up for them the vision of a political orthodoxy which will rejoice in the progress and development of the United Provinces of Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, New Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and Vancouver Island, and with the contiguous territories developing as did those provinces which once were territories South of the sixtieth parallel.

T. A. Patrick.